

May 16, 2002

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE NEW SOURCE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE LANDFILLS

FACT SHEET

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing amendments to its 1996 new source performance standards for municipal solid waste landfills. Landfills subject to the NSPS accept and handle everyday household waste; they do not handle hazardous waste.
- ! The proposed amendments clarify the 1996 NSPS, reducing burden and increasing flexibility for industry. The proposed amendments would not change emission control requirements for landfills and would not change the number of affected facilities, compliance costs, or environmental benefits.
- ! The proposed amendments would clarify who is responsible for compliance activities, add four new definitions, add a new option for complying with the standards, clarify a current exemption, and add one new exemption to the NSPS.
- ! EPA will take public comment for 60 days starting on the date of publication in the Federal Register. EPA will hold a public hearing, if requested, within 30 days of the Federal Register publication. After carefully considering the comments received, EPA will issue final amendments.

BACKGROUND

- ! As the waste in a landfill decomposes, it breaks down to form landfill gases, such as methane, smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOC), air toxics, and pollutants known or suspected to cause cancer and other serious health effects. Landfills are the largest human-generated source of methane emissions in the United States. Methane contributes to global climate change.
- ! On March 12, 1996, EPA issued a final action that controls emissions of a variety of air pollutants from new and existing large municipal waste landfills. That action included the NSPS that apply to new, modified, and reconstructed landfills, as well as emission guidelines (EG) that apply to existing landfills.
- ! The 1996 NSPS and EG reduce emissions of VOC; air toxics, such as benzene, carbon tetrachloride and chloroform; and malodorous compounds from existing and new landfills by more than 90,000 tons annually (a 53 percent reduction from 1996 levels). The NSPS and EG also significantly reduce emissions of methane, a major constituent of landfill gas and a potent global

climate change gas. By reducing methane emissions, the NSPS also increase safety in and near landfills.

- ! The 1996 NSPS and EG require large landfills that emit nonmethane organic compounds (NMOC) in excess of 50 megagrams (Mg) per year to control emissions. In general, controlling emissions involves drilling collection wells into the landfill and routing the gas to a suitable energy recovery system, combustion device or treatment system.

WHAT ARE WE PROPOSING?

The proposed amendments would make the following changes to the 1996 NSPS:

- ! Include a definition for “treatment system” and add more detailed language in the current treatment standard. The proposed amendments better define the option to treat landfill gas so that it achieves the emissions reductions originally envisioned by the NSPS.
- ! Clarify the treated landfill gas exemption and define “treated landfill gas” and “untreated landfill gas” to support the exemption.
- ! Exempt large boilers and process heaters from the initial performance test. These devices consistently achieve the standard established in the 1996 NSPS, and EPA historically has exempted these devices in other standards.
- ! Add a new definition for “landfill owner/operator” to clarify who is responsible for compliance when on-site equipment is used to collect and control or treat landfill gas.
- ! Allow landfill owners/operators to transfer untreated landfill gas off-site for control or treatment by a third party. This new option supports new innovative landfill operations, resulting in greater flexibility while maintaining the emissions reductions required in the final NSPS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- ! Interested parties can download the rule from EPA's web site on the Internet under recently signed rules at the following address: (<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/rules.html>).
- ! For further information on the amendments, contact Ms. Michele Laur of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5256.
- ! EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air toxics program, as well as many other air pollution programs and issues. The Office of Air and Radiation's home page address is: (<http://www.epa.gov/oar/>).